



United States Senator Kent Conrad

North Dakota

Summer 2007

Dear Friends,

News reports from Iraq and Afghanistan remind us everyday of the sacrifices made by the men and women of our nation's military. Many North Dakota families have seen loved ones in the Reserve, Guard and active duty forces make the ultimate sacrifice of their lives – and many families are caring for a loved one with a permanent injury.

As a nation, we have a solemn obligation to provide all of our veterans – whether they are veterans of recent wars or those long past – with the best health care our federal government can provide. As United States Senator from North Dakota, a state with a proud tradition of military service, it is my privilege to work on behalf of all our veterans and their families.

This Veterans Report provides a brief summary of issues before Congress that matter to military veterans and their families. I can report that we have had success in some areas – but we also face serious obstacles that will require us to work together if we are to prevail. I hope you find this Veterans Report helpful and informative.

Sincerely,

Kent Conrad

United States Senator

Budget Boosts Veterans' Healthcare

This Spring Congress passed a federal budget resolution that boosts overall funding for veterans programs by \$11.4 billion over last year's budget – including an additional \$6.7 billion devoted to health care.

As Chairman of the Senate Budget Committee, Senator Conrad was a key architect of the boost in veterans funding. His goal of boosting health care for veterans came after a series of field hearings in North Dakota where he heard testimony firsthand from both veterans and health care providers.

In a letter to Senator Conrad, leaders from four of America's leading veterans' organizations wrote: "Without question, this budget resolution demonstrates, through action, your commitment to our nation's sick and disabled veterans and reflects greatly on the moral obligations we have to the men and women who were injured defending our freedom and way of life."

The budget also rejects the President's proposal to increase fees on many veterans receiving their health care through the Department of Veterans Affairs.

To provide for the safety and well-being of tomorrow's veterans, Senator Conrad's budget also fully funds the President's budget request for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.



Senator Conrad greets airmen from the Minot Air Force Base on one of a series of ICBM and B-52 related fact-finding visits to the base.

Improvement for Vets Home

Home to dozens of veterans and their spouses, the Veterans Home in Lisbon has a crucial role of providing nursing home care. Despite the support of the community and the hard work of a dedicated staff, however, the building itself was in dire need of replacement.

Senator Conrad wrote U.S. Veterans Affairs Secretary James Nicholson and Gov. John Hoeven to urge them to make federal and state funds available for reconstruction of the facility. Since then, the state Legislature approved \$6.4 million for rebuilding the home and Senator Conrad is working with the VA to provide matching funds.

Visit www.conrad.senate.gov for the latest news affecting our nation's veterans.

“The government has an obligation to meet the promises made to the men and women who have worn our nation’s uniform,” Senator Conrad said. “An up-to-date Veterans Home in Lisbon is one such way we can honor the service of our veterans.”

Veteran Clinics Open Across North Dakota

Providing health care to rural veterans is a serious problem in North Dakota. Of the 60,000 veterans in North Dakota, only 37 percent live within a one-hour drive of a hospital or a primary caregiver.

Since that problem was identified in a field hearing of the Senate Budget Committee, the VA has agreed to open a series of new clinics across North Dakota to supplement existing clinics in Bismark, Minot and Grafton. The VA has already opened Community Based Outpatient Clinics in Williston, Dickinson and Jamestown. New clinics are to open in Devils Lake and at Grand Forks Air Force Base.



Senator Conrad meets with North Dakota veterans in his Washington, D.C. office.

“Many of North Dakota’s veterans are forced to drive hundreds of miles to get the health care they need. These new clinics will dramatically cut down on travel time and ensure veterans receive the care they need and earned,” Senator Conrad said.

Honoring Woodrow Keeble

On Oct. 20, 1951, during the height of the Korean War, Woodrow Wilson Keeble - acting single-handedly and heavily wounded - crawled through heavy enemy fire and took out three machine gun bunkers and two trenches of enemy troops, saving the lives of dozens of American soldiers who had been pinned down.

Recognizing the unmatched bravery of Keeble’s actions, Senator Conrad has made the consideration of Keeble for the Medal of Honor a top priority. Progress was made earlier this year when Senator Conrad helped guide the Emergency Supplemental Bill to passage. The bill included legislation that granted Keeble an exception to an arcane rule that would have prevented his case from consideration on a technicality. Supporters of the Keeble family are awaiting a final decision from the President.

Senator Conrad recently presented Keeble’s other military awards and decorations, including the Distinguished Service Cross, two Bronze Stars and four Purple Hearts, to his family in a public ceremony at the Wahpeton armory.

WWII Veterans Honored at Nation's Capital

As a thank you to the men and women of our “Greatest Generation,” Senator Conrad welcomed more than a hundred World War II veterans on a special “Honor Flight” from North Dakota to Washington, D.C.

The veterans were guests of honor at a reception hosted by Senator Conrad and other members of the North Dakota and Minnesota Congressional delegations. They heard remarks from Senator Daniel Inouye, a World War II veteran and Medal of Honor recipient. The ‘Honor Flight’ veterans also toured the National WWII Memorial and laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.



Senator Conrad and Cass County Veterans Service Officer Jim Brent present military awards and decorations to North Dakota veteran Albert Wages in Fargo. Wages, who is believed to be the first man ever to receive two Air Force Commendation Medals, received his medals more than 30 years after his retirement from the Air Force.

‘Stolen Valor’ Act Signed Into Law

In several high-profile cases imposters have been documented wearing falsely-obtained military medals. After hearing from outraged veterans, Senator Conrad wrote legislation to make it a criminal act to use medals and fraudulently claim to be a decorated veteran.

Senator Conrad’s Stolen Valor Act unanimously passed both houses of Congress and was signed into law by President Bush in late 2006.

The Stolen Valor Act expands on existing law, making it a federal crime to impersonate a decorated veteran. The bill specifically calls for the prosecution of imposters who falsely claim to be recipients of the Medal of Honor, Distinguished Service Awards, Silver Star, or Purple Heart. The Stolen Valor Act has already proven effective as a number of individuals have been nabbed for wearing medals they did not earn on the field of battle.

“It is disgraceful that there are imposters claiming to have received medals they did not earn. It is my hope that this legislation will serve to honor the brave men and women of our military who earned these medals through their service,” Senator Conrad said.

Interested in receiving veterans-related email updates? Visit www.conrad.senate.gov and sign up for regular updates from Senator Conrad on issue areas important to you.



Senator Conrad visits with members of the Patriot Guard Riders, a group of veterans who volunteer to serve as a human shield blocking out-of-state groups seeking to disrupt the funerals of fallen soldiers. In recognition of the Patriot Guard Riders, Senator Conrad passed a resolution through the Senate saluting “those who protect the dignity of our fallen soldiers.” Senator Conrad and hundreds of North Dakotans also voiced their thanks at public events in Fargo and Bismarck.

Stay up to date on the latest veterans-related news by signing up for Senator Conrad's email updates at www.conrad.senate.gov.

Senator Kent Conrad's Veterans Report



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